

## Recreation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – March 11, 2026

### Call to Order

**Members Present:** Lauren Watkins, Brad Long, Bill Bowen, Jason Trent, George Vancore, Hal Dockins, Whitney Graves

**Members Absent:** None

**Recreation Staff Present:** Ryan Kane, Director; Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director; Carrie Miska, Business Manager; Lauren Trice, Administrative Coordinator/Liaison

**Also Present:** Christian Whitehurst, County Commissioner; Marithza Ross, St. Johns County Parks Foundation; Jalisa Ferguson, County Attorney

**Approval of the Minutes:** Watkins called for approval of the February 11, 2026 meeting minutes and received a motion from Dockins, seconded by Vancore. Motion passes 7/0.

**Public Comment:** The Chair called for Public Comments for non-agenda items:

1. **Nathan Vella** – who runs backyard rule for baseball and softball. Would like to respectfully request the RB Hunt field be reopened during June for his participants. His concern is that his program goes through the proper permitting process and other field users may not. Ultimate frisbee group that meets Saturdays at 10am is the unpermitted user.

### Reports

**Comm. Whitehurst** – There was a groundbreaking yesterday for Greenbriar Park. It includes athletic fields and a library hub, as well as a precinct for the Supervisor of Elections.

**Chair Report** – Watkins said everyone has a draft of the annual report that goes to the Board of County Commissioners for the Recreation Advisory Board's review before it is submitted. Dockins mentioned adding his power walking clinic. Vancore brought up the Tower Committee that RAB took over. Bowen brought up adding disc golf to the north end of the County under requests. He also mentioned the parcel recently purchased adjacent to the golf course, Watkins said that was already included. Watkins will make final updates and sent to Ryan and Jamie for review before it goes to

### Member Reports

**Whitney Graves** shared that there is an event at Toco High School on March 25<sup>th</sup> for 5<sup>th</sup> graders who are rising leaders. The Tax Collectors office has concluded selling beach passes February 27<sup>th</sup>. Turkey hunting season starts this weekend in some Water Management areas.

**Hal Dockins** attended Adult Day Camp last week with Kelly Ussia. He praised Kelly's program and mentioned that they visited many sites, including Beluthahatchee, Alpine Groves, and more. He recently completed his power walking clinic. The next clinic will be at the new Sportsplex track.

**Jason Trent** apologized for missing the previous meeting due to a work emergency. He is looking forward to the Players Championship. He requested the PowerPoint that was presented in the previous meeting. He also inquired about the possibility of Serenata Beach Club beach access. Kane said there

were two parcels of land by the Serenata Club being considered for purchase by the County. This will come back to the Board of County Commissioners

Bill Bowen is happy to see that the Shore Drive Trail Project is done. He said parks and rec installed some new T pads last weekend and they are great. The contractor Partin is great to work with.

Brad Long shared that he has been able to visit some parks in the last few weeks. He also got his beach pass and complimented the new process. He also commended staff for the improvements to parks along A1A.

Marithza Ross shared flyers for the upcoming Kids Triathlon with the board. They currently have 6 sponsors for the event. This year they can accommodate up to 300 kids. Last year they had just over 80 kids and are hoping to increase this year.

**George Vancore** reported that there are 2500 kids from Creeks Athletic Association and 4200 kids in soccer, for a total of almost 7,000 kids in the NW end of the county. This does not include middle school sports. He complimented the upgraded lights at Plantation Park. They are continuing to see problems with electric bikes. A lot of the kids are very respectful when approached. He said the kids mention that the signs say in authorized areas, but they are unsure what those areas are.

**Dockins** brought up flooding at Ron Parker Park. There is still flooding even 2 days after it rains. Kane shared that the County has just brought in a firm to evaluate drainage at the site. The cheapest solution is about \$500,000.

Watkins made the adjustment to the agenda to clarify that Jalissa Ferguson would be reviewing Sunshine Laws and Watson would be reviewing the rules of decorum with the board.

**Jalissa Ferguson** reviewed Sunshine Laws with the board. This law applies equally to elected and appointed boards. Meetings must: be open to the public, minutes must be recorded. Ferguson reviewed communication guidelines, public comments, . If a violation occurs, then the action is void.

Unintentional and intentional I violations can result in a fine up to \$500. Intentional violations can also result in jail time. Dockins inquired if there was insurance for unintentional violations and Watkins said there is not, because this is not a non-profit board. Vancore mentioned that board members are in multiple community related positions. Lastly, she shared that she recommended that members use a separate email for board business in case of public records requests,

Watkins shared that each board member has a handout on rules and decorum. She requested that board members minimize any back and forth conversation that does not go through the chair.

### **Approval of Special Events**

**Baccari** provided an overview of each special event.

**Long** inquired about set up and break down of one of the events and if that interfered with turtle nesting season. Baccari said it did not.

**Dockins** asked about the Crosswater baptism on the beach. He asked if approval was needed if just one person was being baptized. Baccari recommended that he reach out to Danielle on the Beaches team for clarification on the policy.

Watkins proposed making a motion to approve all special events. Vancore made motion, and Graves seconded. Motion passed to approve all three applications 7/0.

### **Staff Reports**

**Ryan Kane** shared that we've had a few successful groundbreakings recently. Yesterday was the Greenbriar Complex. There will be ballfields, a library with community center space, and space for the Supervisor of Elections. This site will also likely be a summer camp location. Kane visited the Silverleaf Sportsplex and the Shearwater Community Center yesterday. They are set to be completed by December. Included in this is the first public track in St. Johns County that is not at a school. There will be a skate park, library, pickleball, basketball, playgrounds, and a splash pad. These two locations will be across the street from each other. There is also a K-8 school near these parks. This will be another location for summer camp, as well as after school programs.

**Dockins** inquired about whether programming will begin or soft openings at the parks before the ribbon cuttings

**Kane** also mentioned that the SUN trail is coming into St. Johns County, it is a state trail. It will extend from the 207 trail to Nease Road to County Road 214, as well as a stretch by Marineland. It is an FDOT program, they give the County the funds to build and maintain it. Vancore inquired if the new playgrounds do not say "ADA Accessible". Jamie said they are all ADA Accessible, however some are more accessible than others. He also inquired about Davis Park. Kane said this is included in the 4 parks project. They will get artificial turf and additional parking. This should be included in the Northeast Park Construction, that groundbreaking is happening soon. This should begin by the end of May. Bowen inquired about the Sykes property. It has not yet closed. He also asked where the funds from the defunct disc golf project at the golf course would be. Kane said where the funds go would be determined by the County administrator. Jason Trent asked if there are any County Park baseball fields that are 350 feet. Kane said he would have to get back with him.

Jamie Baccari said that the beginning of the month \$253,255 has already been collected in Beach Toll Revenue this year, which is already \$100,000 more this year than it was last year. They anticipate an increase in sales this year. We have a new playground at Alpine Groves Park, an owl that is a Kompan one of a kind design. The second phase is starting soon. We are also redoing the trail at Alpine. Next year they are looking at Canopy or Vaill Point. The De Leon Shores groundbreaking for improvements was last weekend. They will be getting a

This past weekend we had Movie in the Park and Kite Day. We have Night Under the Stars, Glow in the Dark Easter Egg Hunt, Kids got Talent

Youth basketball numbers

Lottery numbers, jamie will have that information next month.

Vancore asked Baccari about the old firehouse in Fruit Cove. Long inquired about the donated land from the foundation. Kane said it was determined that 85% of the land could not be developed. There is a land management plan to keep the site healthy. There is nothing put together for development at the

site. Potential future plans include a pond and picnic area on the side of the road. Watkins asked where that is. It is on the intersection of Greenbriar and Longleaf.

**Dockins** asked if there is a plan to change the names of the new regional parks. Kane said 3 of the 4 have official names. The Northeast Park name is still TBD. The Northwest Park is named Greenbriar Park and Library and the Sportsplex is the Silverleaf St. Johns County Sportsplex. The other park is the Shearwater Community Park and Library. Kane shared that although there is no requirement, typically the County

**Bill Bowen** made a motion to adjourn, seconded by **George Vancore**.

Meeting adjourned 7/0